



Building Bright Beginnings

Indiana Department of Environmental Management
P.O. Box 6015
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-6015

50-01 Address Service Requested

For more information, call the Indiana Department of Environmental Management at (800) 451-6027 or visit our website at www.in.gov/idem/kids.



Simple steps to help make our environment a safer place.





When you think of the environment, you might think of clear lakes, dense forests, or Indiana's many beautiful state parks. But the environment is much broader than that. It's your backyard. It's inside and outside your home. It's everything around you.

Recent research shows that the first four years of a child's life are critical to his or her future. But it's important to reduce exposure to environmental threats in and around your home for children (and parents) of any age. For example, lead and mercury are dangerous substances that can be found in many Hoosier households. And there are simple steps that you can take to reduce your family's chances of exposure.

Please review this brochure and keep it handy for future reference. Your environment and your family will benefit greatly.

Frank O'Bannon

Frank O'Bannon
Governor



Whether you live on a farm near Greenfield, a house in the suburbs of Evansville, or an apartment in the heart of downtown Indianapolis, the environment can have an effect on you, your children and your family.

That's why the Indiana Department of Environmental Management has teamed up with the Indiana State Department of Health and the Governor's Building Bright Beginnings initiative to bring useful information and preventive measures to parents and families.

Of course, not all environmental threats can be eliminated or avoided. But, by following the steps outlined in this brochure, you can reduce the threats substantially. And help make your corner of Indiana a safer place to live.

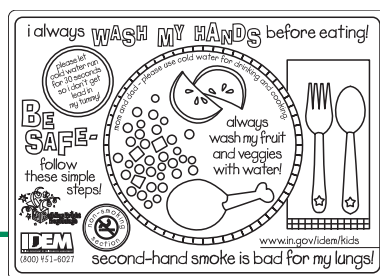
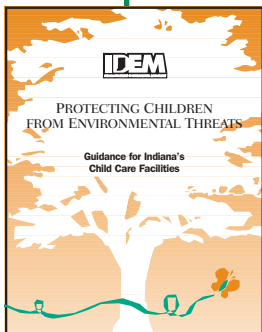
Lori F. Kaplan

Lori F. Kaplan
Commissioner

Children are one of Indiana's most valuable natural resources.

Look for our "Simple Steps for Families" materials across Indiana. Posters, magnets, placemats, guidance manuals and training videos for child care facilities, and this brochure have been designed to teach simple steps that help protect Hoosier children from environmental threats.

To receive any of these materials, call the Indiana Department of Environmental Management at (800) 451-6027, press 0 and ask for ext. 3-5628 or dial 317-233-5628 or visit the Web-site at www.in.gov/idem/kids.





Use cold water
for drinking and
cooking and let
it run for **30
SECONDS.**

LEAD PAINT CHIPS may
collect on surfaces such as
window sills. Clean monthly
with detergent and water.

WASH YOUR HANDS
regularly.

Have your children **TESTED FOR LEAD.**
Call the Indiana Family Helpline at
1-800-433-0746 to learn where your
child may be tested.

Always keep **FLOORS
AND CARPETS** clean.

Lead in paint and drinking water.

Lead can cause serious (and often permanent) problems as children grow. It's especially dangerous for children age six and younger. The effects of lead exposure include learning and developmental delays, hyperactivity, impaired hearing and brain damage.

Lead can be found in paint, water pipes, dust and soil – especially in homes built prior to 1978. While it may not be practical to remove lead from your piping, paint and soil, there are many things you can do to keep the lead away from your child. Care and consistency in cleaning and good habits can make a huge difference.

Reducing the lead content in your water.

Lead can be found in drinking water usually found in the lead solder in piping.

Make it a habit to:

- Use cold water for drinking and cooking and let it run for 30 seconds to flush your pipes of lead, especially if infants may be drinking the water. To learn more, contact IDEM's Drinking Branch at 1-800-451-6027 ask for extension 308-3308.

Reducing your children's exposure to lead paint and dust.

If your home was built before 1978 (especially prior to 1950), assume the paint contains lead.

Removing paint is not practical unless you're remodeling. Instead, the goal is to

keep your child away from the lead in the paint. Lead dust and chips accumulate in areas where painted surfaces rub together, such as window sills and doors.

Make it a habit to:

- Wash all areas around doors and windows with detergent and water monthly.
- If you have flaking, peeling paint, assume it might be lead and:
 1. Put a drop cloth under all work areas to make cleanup safe and easy.
 2. Wet scrape, but never sand, loose paint. Use a putty knife.
 3. Collect paint chips and double bag them in 6-mm bags (as thick as freezer bags) with air expelled. Dispose of bags with the trash.
 4. Wash area with detergent and water.
 5. Repaint the surface.
- Wet clean carpets every year. But make sure the carpeting dries thoroughly, otherwise there's a potential for mold, which can cause asthma or irritate allergies.
- If you work around lead or have a hobby that involves lead (such as hunting or stained glass projects), change your clothes and shoes before coming inside your home.


- If you have pottery from other countries in your home or old pottery made in the United States, do not store food in it unless you know that it is lead-free. Not all countries prohibit the use of lead.
- Don't let your children play with antique toys unless you know that the toys do not contain lead.

Reducing your child's exposure to lead in the soil.

Lead can be found in the soil from peeling paint chips that fall from the house and past use of leaded gasoline.

Make it a habit to:

- Remove surface soil if it's contaminated with paint chips.
- Use a door mat or remove shoes to help keep contaminants out of your home.
- Encourage your kids to play in mulched or grassy areas instead of dirt that is near peeling paint areas such as walls, fences and sheds.
- Encourage your kids to wash their hands regularly, especially before eating. Many health problems can be avoided by following this simple step.



When **CUTTING OR SANDING TREATED LUMBER**, never let your kids play around the sawdust. Use a broom, not a vacuum, to clean up.

WET SCRAPE, DON'T SAND, PAINTED SURFACES. If your home was built before 1978, assume the paint contains lead. Collect all paint chips and put them in a sealed bag.

Use **LOW-ODOR, LATEX PAINTS** and don't let kids breathe the vapors.

Identify and recycle all **MERCURY CONTAINING DEVICES** in your home – they can be harmful to children if misused or broken.

Home maintenance and repair.

**You may not be able to fix all problems.
But here's how you can avoid the important ones that may harm your children.**

If you make home improvements yourself, make sure that your children aren't exposed to lead paint, asbestos insulation, mercury switches, or chemically treated lumber dust. Keep kids away from dry wall dust.

- If your house was built before 1978, assume the paint contains lead. When working with painted surfaces, including stripping paint or removing dry wall, remember:
 - Never sand dry surfaces.
 - Collect all paint chips and flakes and put them in a bag for the trash.
 - Put a drop cloth under all work areas to help make cleanup safe and easy.
- When cutting or sanding treated or cedar lumber, never let your kids play around the sand or sawdust. Treated lumber (the green kind) contains copper, chrome and arsenic which are all toxic metals.

Protect yourself by:

1. Wearing gloves and a respirator or dust mask.
2. Sweeping up with a broom, never vacuuming.
3. Washing the area after the work is done.
4. Make sure to wash work clothes.
5. Children should always wash their hands after playing outside, especially on playgrounds with treated lumber.

6. Never burn treated wood.
 7. Seal decks, playground equipment and picnic tables that are made with treated lumber with a good oil-absorbent at least once a year.
- Replace mercury-containing thermostats with electronic products. Mercury-containing tilt switches have been used in thermostats for more than 40 years, but are very hazardous if broken. Mercury is toxic in small doses and can affect the human central nervous system, kidneys and liver. It is extremely dangerous to pregnant women and children.
 - Recycle fluorescent bulbs at the end of their useful lives. Mercury vapor and fluorescent bulbs use up to 50 percent less electricity than incandescent bulbs, but they must be carefully handled and properly disposed (contact your local solid waste management district or call (800) 988-7901 to find out how and where you can recycle bulbs and other mercury containing items). Mercury vapor, immediately released upon breakage, can contaminate the air you breathe.
 - Use water-based paints such as latex when possible. Don't let your kids breathe paint vapors. Let them play at friends' homes until the paint is dry.

- Prevent releasing hazardous silica dust, wet scraping spackling compound on dry wall.
- No matter how old or new your house, it might have asbestos in it. Houses built before 1978 have the most serious problem. Asbestos has been proven to cause lung cancer. Asbestos can be found in thousands of building products such as insulation, dry wall putty, ceiling tiles, roofing and floor tile. As long as the materials are left alone, they are not a problem. When doing home maintenance on materials potentially containing asbestos-containing material, always keep it wet to prevent particles from getting into the air and your lungs. Also:
 1. Never sand the surface.
 2. Wear protective clothing, including gloves and a tight-fitting respirator.
 3. Put the asbestos in a thick, plastic bag (look for bags as thick as freezer bags, about 6 mm).
 4. Fill the bottom of the bag with water before sealing it. Dispose the bag with the trash.
 5. After removing asbestos, wipe the surface down with detergent and water, and put the rags in the plastic bag. Let the surface dry. Wash it down again.



Use **BAITS FOR INSECTS AND TRAPS FOR RODENTS** instead of pest sprays and teach your kids to stay away.

ANIMAL AND INSECT DROPPINGS may cause diseases such as asthma – clean it up and keep your child away!

Limit activity on **OZONE** action days.

If adults smoke, **BE SURE IT'S OUTDOORS.** Tobacco smoke is especially hard on kids' growing lungs.

Keep **AUTOMOTIVE FLUIDS** such as windshield washer fluid, antifreeze, and gasoline away from kids.

Keep **CHEMICALS AND MEDICINES** in their original containers and out of the reach of children. Always follow label instructions.

Teach your kids to play keep away.

Keeping your kids away from certain hazards will help keep them healthier and safer.

Many household products, chemicals and medicines such as cleaning agents, automotive fluids and pesticides may be harmful for children if not used properly. Children breathe more, eat more, and have a faster metabolism than adults. They also play on the floor and maybe more sensitive to the residues from the chemicals.

Make it a habit to:

- Always follow the directions on the label and dispose of empty containers properly.
- Store all chemicals high up in locked areas and keep in original containers.
- Teach kids about 911 and how to recognize poison stickers and labels.
- Buy only the amount needed so you are not storing excess chemicals.

Try using integrated pest management strategies (IPM) when treating for pests. IPM uses a variety of techniques to reduce pests in a way that avoids harmful effects to people and the environment. Keep the pests from entering your home in the first place by sealing holes and applying weather stripping on door entrances. Do not give

pests a reason to infest your home – bugs and rodents seek food, water and shelter just like humans. Good sanitation and clutter control will decrease the desire of pests to raise their families in your home.

Make it a habit to:

- Seal holes on the exterior and interior with a good sealant.
- Clean-up spills right away and do not leave trash out.
- Store food in airtight containers.
- Reduce clutter and cardboard storage – Remember a good cleaning is pest control.
- Use baits in cracks and crevices and traps for insects and traps for rodents instead of applying pesticide sprays. If you have children or domestic animals you should not use rodent baits inside. Mice hide the baits just like squirrels hide nuts so a child could mistake the bait for candy.
- If you hire a contractor, ask them to use IPM strategies.


For more information on how to treat for pests, visit the IPM Regional Resource Website at www.entm.purdue.edu/entomology/outreach.

There are other hazardous substances from which you should teach your child to play keep away.

- If an adult smokes, smoke outside and do not smoke in the car.
- Bird and animal droppings may cause serious diseases. Keep your sandbox covered and keep your kids away from areas where droppings may be present.
- Watch for the signs along creeks and recreational areas that alert you to bacteria or other problems.

Many asthmatics are sensitive to outdoor air pollutants such as ozone, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide.

Call the IDEM Smog Watch Ozone Forecast at 800-631-2841 or visit the internet at www.in.gov/idem/air/smog to access the daily ozone forecasts. You can also receive email notification about ozone alerts in your area.



INSTALL BOTH CARBON MONOXIDE AND SMOKE DETECTORS to alert your family of potential hazards.

REDUCE CLUTTER and cardboard storage.

Test your home for **RADON GAS**.

Change **FURNACE FILTERS** every 3 months.

TEST YOUR WELL or private drinking water supply for nitrates and bacteria.

Put your home to the test.

More ways to make your children's world a safer place.

Some hazards are hard to see. Sometimes you need to learn more through home tests or talking to people. Here are some suggestions to help protect your family:

- **Install a carbon monoxide alarm in your home.** Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas. But it also is dangerous and deadly. Be careful in unvented rooms that have heating appliances that burn gas or kerosene.
- **Test your home for radon.** Radon is colorless, odorless and tasteless, but it can lead to lung tissue damage and lung cancer when inhaled over a long period of time. It's especially a problem in the basement or ground floor of your home. Many hardware stores carry radon test kits or you can call the National Safety Council at (800) 557-2366. For questions or a list of certified radon testers and mitigators, call Indiana Radon Hotline at (800) 272-9723.
- **Replace and recycle mercury containing items.** Many glass thermometers contain mercury, a silver-colored liquid. Thermometers with a different colored liquid – usually red – contain alcohol, not mercury. A variety of items may have mercury-

containing switches or relays. Non-mercury alternatives are safer. In Indiana, local solid waste management districts have made it easy to recycle products containing mercury.

- **Call 1-800-433-0746 to learn about fishing limits for PCB and mercury contamination** or visit www.in.gov/isdh to learn more about fish advisories.
- **Talk with your drinking water supplier.** They can tell you where your water comes from and what contaminants may be in it. Community water systems are required to send a Consumer Confidence Report that tells information about water quality. If you have well water, test it regularly for nitrates and bacteria.

Check your home for other indoor pollutants such as mold and dust mites. Children may be sensitive to these pollutants especially if they have asthma.

Asthma is the leading chronic illness in children in the United States and the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness. Molds are small organisms found everywhere and are hard to avoid. Many people are sensitive to mold spores.

Make it a habit to:

- Clean hard surfaces with a bleach solution (1/2 cup bleach per gallon of water) or soapy water. Absorbent materials such as drywall, ceiling tile, carpet may need to be replaced if left wet longer than 24 hours.
- Keep drip pans from air conditioners, refrigerators and dehumidifiers clean and dry.
- Fix leaky plumbing and roofs. Ensure gutters are working.
- Use exhaust fans while cooking, showering and running the dishwasher.
- Vent your clothes dryer to the outside.

Dust is made up with several different things in your home. The most prominent element of house dust is the dust mite. Dust mites are very tiny insects that cannot be seen with the naked eye. Mites feed off molds and dead skin that humans shed.

Make it a habit to:

- Wash sheets in hot water once a week. Avoid feather pillows and wool blankets.
- Choose washable stuffed toys and keep them off beds.
- Wet dust when possible and use vacuums with high filtering bags.
- Change furnace filters every season.